

## Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act (H.R. 42)

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*Japanese Latin Americans leaving a temporary internment camp in the Panama Canal Zone to join their relatives in U.S. internment camps. April 7, 1942. Courtesy of San Francisco Public Library.*

**By Congressman Xavier Becerra**

**California's 31st Congressional District**

A little known fact: during World War II, approximately 2,300 men, women and children of Japanese ancestry were forcibly deported from 13 Latin American countries to the United States and placed in an internment camp in Crystal City, Texas. Between 1941 and 1945, our

government orchestrated and financed the forced transfer of these Japanese Latin American internees to use them as hostages in exchange for Americans held by Japan.

Over 800 individuals were included in two prisoner of war exchanges between the U.S. and Japan, where many were deported to a foreign country that they had never set foot on since their ancestors' immigration to Latin America. The remaining Japanese Latin Americans were imprisoned in internment camps without the benefit of due process rights until after the end of the war.

In an effort to acknowledge and rectify this injustice, I introduced H.R. 42, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act. This legislation would create a commission to review and determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the relocation, internment, and deportation of Japanese Latin Americans, and subsequently recommend appropriate remedies.

Further study of the events surrounding the deportation and incarceration of Japanese Latin Americans

We must review directives of the United States military forces and the State Department requiring the

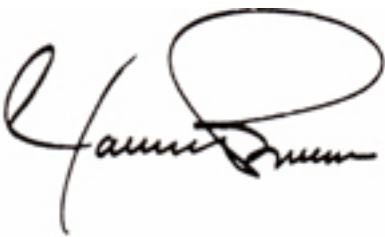


*Japanese Peruvians on their way to U.S. internment camps, 1942.*

Let us renew our resolve to build a better future for our community by dedicating ourselves to remembering how we compromised liberty in the past by passing the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Latin Americans of Japanese Descent Act. Doing so will help us guard it more closely in the future and help us commit ourselves to justice.

I encourage you to find out if your representative is a supporter of this important piece of legislation, and let them know where you stand. Thank you for taking the time to learn more about this important, if little known episode from our nation's past.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Xavier Becerra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the top and a long, sweeping underline.

XAVIER BECERRA

Member of Congress